

# **Libby Community Advisory Group**

## **Meeting Summary**

### **September 9, 2004**

#### **Introductions**

Gerald Mueller, members of the Libby Community Advisory Group (CAG), and guests from the University of Montana Center for Environmental Health introduced themselves. A list of the members in attendance is attached below as Appendix 1.

#### **Agenda**

The CAG agreed to the following agenda for this meeting:

- Dr. Pfau Presentation
- EPA Report
- CARD Report
- TAG Report
- Public Comment

The CAG agreed to vary from its usual agenda order in which agency reports occur first followed by other presentations to accommodate Dr. Pfau's request to appear early on the agenda.

#### **Dr. Pfau Presentation**

Dr. Jean Pfau reminded the CAG that she is a member of the research faculty of the Center for Environmental Health Sciences in the Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences of the University of Montana (Center). As such, she is a colleague of Dr. Andrij Holian, the Center Director, and Dr. Elizabeth Putnam, a Center Human Geneticist. Dr. Pfau introduced two additional colleagues who accompanied her to the meeting tonight, Dr. Curtis Noonan, a Center Epidemiologist, and Jami Sentissi, a Center Research Specialist. Dr. Noonan is helping formulate the research questions that Dr. Pfau is studying, and Ms. Sentissi conducts much of the research laboratory work.

Dr. Pfau has previously appeared before the CAG to describe her research on asbestos and autoimmune disease. At this meeting, she provided the CAG with an update on the results of her research using the Power Point presentation included below as Appendix 2. She also solicited participation of Libby people in future research. Highlights of her presentation include the following.

- Exposure to silica is known to cause a pulmonary fibrosis called silicosis.
- Studies have shown a strong correlation between exposure to silica and autoimmune diseases.
- Why silica causes autoimmune disease is not known.
- Autoimmune disease occurs when the body's immune system attacks its own tissue.
- The research on silica suggests that exposure to asbestos may also be correlated to autoimmune diseases, and Dr. Pfau hopes to determine whether Libby tremolite asbestos is correlated to autoimmune diseases.
- By studying serum samples from people living in Missoula and people in Libby, Dr. Pfau has concluded that the Libby people have more autoimmune responses that would normally be expected.
- This correlation with autoimmune responses does not demonstrate a human health effect.

- Dr. Pfau's objectives for future research include:
  - Confirming the autoimmune diagnosis noted in the surveys conducted in Libby by the Montana Asbestos Screening and Surveillance Activity (MASSA), and determining whether asbestos exposure is associated with increased development of autoimmune disease;
    - Determining whether autoimmune disease is associated with the severity or incidence of asbestosis;
    - Conducting a longitudinal study to correlate autoimmunity with disease progression; and
    - Determining whether the serum antibodies bind and affect fibroblast activity, so that they might contribute to the lung disease.

*Audience Member Comment - I have lupus disease but did not fill out a MASSA survey. You should consider using local newspapers to solicit instances of autoimmune disease in Libby.*

Response - This is a good suggestion. The MASSA survey only went out to those people who checked "yes" on the autoimmune question during the screening, so not everyone who was screened would have gotten a survey. We need information on the incidence of autoimmune diseases in Libby among people.

*CAG Member Question - Are you interested in studying people who were exposed to asbestos in Libby but who do not yet show signs of asbestos-related disease? I am particularly interested in kids who attended Plummer School and may have been exposed to asbestos who are now at least in their 30's but have not yet developed asbestos-related disease.*

Answer - Yes. We need people for our research without disease as well as people are experiencing all forms of the disease.

*CAG Member Comment - Are you determining the level of asbestos exposure in your research?*

Answer - We are currently relying on the screening survey information for exposure data. Developing an exposure matrix in which experts would value the various environmental and/or occupational exposure pathways would be useful.

*CAG Member Question - You said that you are looking for Libby people to enroll in your research studies. Do you have information on the studies on a web site?*

Answer - The CARD Clinic has a link to the Center web site.

*CAG Member Question - Could you write a letter that could be published in our local newspapers describing what you need?*

Answer - I appreciate this suggestion. We need good planning so that we are not overburdening Libby people with research requests.

*CAG Member Comment - We are seeking a memorandum of understanding between the CARD Clinic and UM. We hope to coordinate research requests involving Libby people so that we can protect privacy and ensure that the research is beneficial for our community.*

*CAG Member Question - Could you include in the letter that the research in Missoula is one element and that clinical research in Libby is another?*

Answer - We will consider doing so. We do want to be a partner in clinical research in Libby.

*CAG Member Question - What is scleroderma disease?*

Answer - Scleroderma is an autoimmune disease that produces fibrosis in the skin and organs.

*CAG Member Comment - I have heard of miners with white, scaly hands.*

Response - While I cannot make a diagnosis from your description, what you describe may be *Scleroderma*.

*CAG Member Question - Your premise is that elevated immune system activity due to asbestos exposure might cause autoimmune disease?*

Answer - That is the question we hope to answer.

*CAG Member Question - So you want to research ways to slow down the process of adverse effects on the immune system?*

Answer - Yes. We would hope to explore possible treatments.

*CAG Member Question - Is there a connection to diseases such as diabetes?*

Answer - There is less evidence connecting organ-specific autoimmune diseases, such as diabetes, with environmental exposures. There is more evidence tying environmental exposures to systemic autoimmune diseases like lupus and scleroderma, and other chronic inflammatory problems.

*CAG Member Question - How much do genetic factors affect the development of autoimmune disease? Early settlers of Libby tended to be mostly northern Europeans.*

Answer - Autoimmune disease does tend to run in families. Hereditary factors are a complication that we have to address. We are fortunate to have Dr. Putnam, a human geneticist at the Center working on these issues.

*CAG Member Question - What does your funding situation look like?*

Answer - Funding for the Center is solid. The specific CDC grant currently funding my work is expiring, but we are preparing a grant request for fibroblast work and intend to submit another grant proposal for epidemiology work next year.

*CAG Member Comment - Thank you for sharing your research with us. Research related to asbestos disease is important to Libby.*

## **EPA Report**

Peggy Churchill reported on behalf of EPA on the following topics.

Residential Cleanups - So far this year 78 properties have been cleaned, including 30 interior, 26 exterior, and 22 with a combination of both. The goal for this year is 150 cleanups, a reduced level because of contracting delays. A new contract has been awarded to MARCOR, so this company will not experience layoffs in Libby. MARCOR's bid averaged \$25 thousand per house cleaned.

Railroad Cleanup - Burlington Northern-Sante Fe has chosen Envirocon to conduct cleanup of the railroad facilities. Cleanup began on September 1. Contaminated material removed from under the tracks will be taken to the asbestos cell in the county landfill.

Flyway Cleanup - Cleanup at the Flyway property is 55% complete. Air quality sampling at the property cleanup did detect some asbestos fiber. Completion of the cleanup is expected by mid-

October.

Wendy Thomi then reported on the following topics.

Cleanup Completion Letter - Ms. Thomi passed out a copy of the completion letter which has been or is being mailed to all residents whose home has been cleaned. A copy of the letter is included below as Appendix 3.

Information Packets - Ms. Thomi also passed around samples of two information packets, both of which are available at the EPA Information Center. One was entitled Residential Cleanup and Relocation Information and the other Post Cleanup Information. The first provides information about the residential cleanups and relocation of residents during the cleanup. The second is provided when the cleanup is completed and includes the "Living with Vermiculite Fact Sheet" and a feedback form. This packet explains what to do if vermiculite is found in the home after the cleanup.

CAG Membership List - Ms. Thomi also passed out copies of the current list of CAG members and CAG Resources. The list of current members does not include former members who have not attended several recent meetings. The list also includes interest groups formerly represented on the CAG.

*Audience Member Comment - The completion letter appears to be a good one.*

Response - This letter is a product of the Operations and Maintenance Work Group.

*CAG Member Question - Assume hypothetically that EPA investigates a property for an asbestos-related cleanup. What agency is called in if a contaminant other than asbestos is found?*

Answer - EPA is divided into a number of programs. Which EPA program or state or local agency would have jurisdiction depends on what contaminant is found.

*CAG Member Question - What if solvents or fuels were found? Would EPA clean up vermiculite and leave the other contaminants?*

Answer - The team now working in Libby would clean up asbestos, and would not cleanup other contaminants unless it is co-located with asbestos contamination.

*CAG Member Question - What is the duration of the MARCOR cleanup contract?*

Answer - Three years. EPA may not, however, choose to use the contract for the entire three year period.

*CAG Member Comment - I am told that one of EPA's contractors (MARCOR) is not paying its subcontractors for 90 days.*

Answer - I am unaware of this situation, but we will look into it.

*Audience Member Question - What percentage of residences contaminated with asbestos have been cleaned to date?*

Answer - Out of 1,200 contaminated residences, some 250 have been cleaned, which is about 20%.

*Audience Member Question - My house has been on the cleanup list from the beginning. I have a young child at home. While my house has not been cleaned, EPA has cleaned vacant houses.*

*How are you determining the order by which properties are cleaned?*

Answer - The order depends on the type of cleanup needed, whether interior, exterior, or large and complicated, as well as whether the house is structurally sound. We are also attempting to cluster the cleanup work geographically. The order does not depend on the presence of infants or small children. We consider all contaminated homes to be a priority for cleanup. The locations of the highest level of contamination and exposure potential such as former vermiculite processing areas, schools, and running tracks have been cleaned first.

*CAG Member Comment - Does the 1,200 figure include residences in Troy?*

Answer - No.

*Audience Member Comment - An isolated, vacant house was just cleaned, while houses with small children are still waiting for cleanup.*

Response - I can not speak to the details of the order of the cleanups. We are moving towards conducting the cleanups in geographical clusters. We will re-examine the rationale for the cleanup order and will discuss this some more at the next CAG meeting. This week's Q&A, which apparently has not run in all local newspapers, addresses the order of cleanups.

*Audience Member Comment - The vacant house in question was purchased by the mayor. I have previously asked about EPA involvement in the transfer of ownership to the mayor. What information did EPA pass to the mayor? A business man in town was seeking to buy this property but was told by the city to get permits from EPA. Before he could get the permits, the mayor purchased the property. I invited the mayor to come to this meeting to discuss this situation, but he obviously chose not to do so.*

Response - The cleanup of the house was already in the task order which was written last year. The mayor had no influence over the cleanup schedule. I am not aware of any information passed to the mayor. My guess is that no information was passed to him.

*CAG Member Comment - I also inquired about the facts surrounding this house. The realtor told me that this house had to be sold quickly because it was part of an estate. If he wanted the house, the business man should just have purchased the house and then sought the approvals from EPA.*

*CAG Member Comment - Cleaning the residences in block areas would be helpful so residents would have some sense of when their home might be cleaned.*

*Audience Member Question - Are you supplying letters to residences of homes when the inspection finds no vermiculite?*

Answer - When requested to do so, we are providing what we call "comfort letters" to residents when the inspection finds no vermiculite.

*CAG Member Comment - You are not replacing carpets and cleaning under them. Supplying the HEPA vacuums and recommending their use after the carpets have been cleaned is a good thing. However, when miners would come home covered with dust, the dust got into the carpets and may have become encapsulated in the pad. Won't exposure to asbestos occur when the carpet is removed? Will guidelines be developed for carpet removal?*

Answer - We are developing guidelines. If someone has a question, they should call us.

*CAG Member Comment - I am personally astonished that carpets in contaminated homes are not being removed. Carpets are a natural settling place for contaminants.*

*CAG Member Comment - When carpets are shampooed, contaminants in them will be stirred up.*

*CAG Member Comment - Children and pets crawl around on the carpet. Small children may have 6 to 8 hours a day of exposure from carpets. EPA should be responsible for replacing them in houses contaminated with vermiculite.*

*CAG Member Comment - While dust may facilitate asbestos exposure, dust is not necessary for exposure to asbestos fibers.*

*CAG Member Comment - I know of a former carpet installer who lived near the railroad tracks. She has asbestosis.*

*Audience Member Comment - My store is in the old Penney's building which is next to the location of the old Sears store. Miners covered with dust used to come into these stores. When the carpets were removed from the Sears store, several garbage cans of dust from under the carpets was removed.*

*CAG Member Question - Has EPA sampled underneath carpets in contaminated residences?*

Answer - No. However, we do clearance sampling immediately after a home is cleaned and come back six months later and repeat the sampling. We have not detected asbestos fibers in the clearance samples. The guidelines addressing carpets are being developed with the advice of the Operation and Maintenance Work Group. Currently, we clean but do not replace carpets. We do not believe that replacing carpets would be feasible.

*CAG Member Comment - The TAG will be addressing the carpet issue.*

Response - EPA will be meeting with representatives of the TAG in October and will be discussing the risk analysis and exposure pathways, but we will not be discussing the carpet issue per se.

*CAG Member Question - When is the Administrator coming to Libby for the town meeting?*

Answer - During his recent trip here which was limited in duration, he indicated an interest in returning in the spring.

*CAG Member Question - Did MARCOR's \$25,000 per residence cleanup bid include interior and exterior cleanups?*

Answer - Yes.

*Audience Member Question - How could MARCOR make a binding \$25,000 per residence cleanup bid without knowing the extent of the cleanup required? Is the bid for cleaning specific houses?*

Answer - The Task Order on which bids were solicited was for cleanup of 30 specific houses, and each company had the opportunity to visit each of the 30 houses prior to submitting their bid. MARCOR's bid was based on their experience with cleanups in Libby. The bid total was cumulative for all of the 30 houses. The \$25,000 is an average per house figure, not a mandatory expenditure amount for each individual house. Some cleanups may cost more than that amount,

and some less.

*CAG Member Question - Fact Sheet #11 states that the cleanup will cost \$37.5 million over five years. How does this amount relate to the cleanup contract?*

Answer - The contract has a capacity of this amount; however, we may not choose to use all of the capacity.

*CAG Member Question - How does this amount relate to EPA's annual budget?*

Answer - It doesn't. We get money quarterly, and allocate the funding to the various contracts according to need.

*CAG Member Question - Is the cost of contractor oversight included within the \$37.5 million?*

Answer - No.

## **CARD Clinic Report**

Mike Giesey, President of the CARD Clinic Board of Directors, reported on behalf of the CARD Clinic on the following topics.

UM Meeting - Two or three weeks ago, CARD staff and Board members met with UM researchers to discuss a memorandum of understanding regarding research. We want to be considered a partner in the research. The meeting went well. We encouraged the UM researchers to come to CAG meetings and brief it about the research, and we are pleased that Dr. Pfau did so tonight. UM anticipates additional research and community surveys, and the CARD intends to coordinate these activities to minimize the effects on the people of Libby.

CFARR Conference - We will convene the third conference with the Committee For Asbestos-Related Research (CFARR), a group of researchers interested in Libby and asbestos disease, on Monday and Tuesday of next week. CFARR will evaluate future research proposals and provide advice to the CARD Clinic regarding them.

ATSDR - We are sponsoring along with the Agency for Toxic Substances Disease Registry (ATSDR), a work conference to review x-rays of folks with ARD from Libby. We have historical and current x-rays of a number of people (names and any identifiers are removed from the x-rays). The conference involves 3 x-ray readers. When they agree that a "blip" on a particular "current" x-ray is and asbestos related abnormality – they will then look at the historical x-ray for that person to view how the abnormality progresses over time. This is a first step is determining that Libby amphibole progresses differently than chrysotile asbestos. This could lead to establishing a procedure for reviewing x-rays of people who have developed asbestos-related disease so that we can assess how x-rays record disease progression.

LADC Funding - CARD officials have had four meetings with the Lincoln Area Development Corporation (LADC) to request funding to support asbestos disease-related research in Libby. LADC seems to prefer a loan rather than a grant to us. Everyone is urged to attend the LADC meeting on September 15 at which time they will decide whether or not to proceed with a loan. We have asked for \$250,000 for two purposes, to develop a data base to be used in asbestos-related disease research and to purchase freezers to hold tissue samples.

## **TAG Report**

Gayla Benefield reported on behalf of the TAG on the following subjects:

TAG Activities - The TAG has been active for six months since it was reformulated. The Board has been meeting about once a week to get our feet on the ground. We hold a TAG meeting every second Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. in room 212 of the College. Everyone is welcome to attend these meetings.

TAG-EPA Meeting - TAG Board members and staff will meet with EPA in Denver on October 4. We intend to discuss five specific topics including carpets and wall insulation.

Health and Safety Committee - The TAG has established a health and safety committee which is discussing issues of worker safety with EPA.

## **Public Comment**

*Audience Member Comment - Will the CARD freezer hold biopsy and autopsy samples? I ask because of sensitivity about autopsies apparent at a past CAG meeting when some spoke against HNA paying for autopsies.*

Answer by Pat Cohan - At this time we plan to hold blood samples. At some future time we may need to hold tissue samples as well.

*CAG Member Question - Has the Asbestos Related Disease Network received a reply to its letter to Dr. J. Jay Flynn of the Health Network of America that was discussed at the last CAG meeting?*

Answer by Helen Clark - We have not yet received a response. Dr. Flynn was expecting our letter, and we anticipate receiving a reply.

## **Next Meeting**

The next CAG meeting is scheduled for 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 14, 2004 in the Ponderosa Room of Libby City Hall. One agenda topic will be the membership on the CAG.



**Appendix 1**  
**CAG Member & Guest Attendance List**  
**September 9, 2004**

**Members**

Mike Giesey  
Ken Hays  
David F. Latham  
Wendy Thomi  
Peggy Churchill  
LeRoy Thom  
Gayla Benefield  
Gary D. Swenson  
Clinton Maynard  
Norita Skramstad

**Group/Organization Represented**

CARD  
Senior Citizens  
*The Montanian Newspaper*  
EPA Community Involvement  
EPA  
Former Grace Employee  
LCAVRO  
Libby Voluntary Fire Department  
Area Asbestos Research Group  
Asbestos Victim

**Guests**

Dr. Jean Pfau  
Curtis Noonan  
Jami Sentissi

UM Center for Environmental Health  
UM Center for Environmental Health  
UM Center for Environmental Health

## Appendix 3

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July 23, 2004

Ref: 8EPR-SR

Libby Resident  
P.O. Box XXX  
Libby, MT 59923

RE: EPA Cleanup at XXX Specific Place, Libby, Montana  
59923

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has completed a cleanup under emergency response authority at the property referenced above. The cleanup was conducted pursuant to the Action Memorandum Amendment dated May 9, 2002 for the Libby Asbestos Site. Cleanup was conducted between May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2004 and May 11, 2004. A signed copy of the Removal and Restoration Completion Form for this property is enclosed for reference and details the specific actions that were taken. There is no financial liability to the property owner or renter of this property, either current or future.

Visual inspections were conducted and confirmation samples were collected after the cleanup to ensure that cleanup standards were achieved. Sampling typically includes interior air samples of the buildings and/or samples of outdoor soils in areas of concern. Analysis of samples for this property showed that Libby amphibole asbestos was not detected, or was detected at levels below EPA's current level of concern. The property meets EPA's current standards for protectiveness of human health for Libby amphibole asbestos contamination set forth in EPA's Action Level and Clearance Criteria Technical Memorandum (December 15, 2(X)3) for the Libby Asbestos Site.

In most circumstances vermiculite or Libby asbestos-containing soil or materials were removed. EPA may have chosen to leave these materials in place if they were located in inaccessible areas and not likely to be disturbed. These areas typically include spaces within walls, below carpets, outdoor soils below hard, improved surfaces such as driveways or foundations, or outdoor soils deeper than twelve to eighteen inches. In most cases, EPA did not inspect or sample in such areas. If you plan to disturb, or accidentally encounter, vermiculite or Libby asbestos containing materials, you should read and follow EPA guidance. This guidance can be obtained at the EPA Information Center at 501 Mineral Ave. in Libby. A database documenting areas where contamination was left in place will be maintained by EPA.

Very low, often immeasurable, levels of Libby asbestos may remain in soil, indoor dust, fabrics, upholstery and carpets. Current EPA risk assessments suggest that these circumstances do

not pose a significant health risk. However, residents can further protect themselves by taking simple precautions found in EPA guidance, including the use of HEPA-filter equipped vacuum cleaners. EPA will provide each property owner a HEPA vacuum upon completion of cleanup.

EPA's investigations and cleanup addressed amphibole asbestos that is related to the former Libby vermiculite mine and did not address other types of asbestos. There are several potential asbestos-containing materials commonly found in older homes across the country. This letter makes no statement or inferences regarding these materials.

At this time, EPA considers cleanup of this property complete and does not anticipate that additional cleanup measures will be required. However, EPA and others continue to investigate the health effects of Libby asbestos. Cleanup levels and approaches may be adjusted in the future as new information and data becomes available. EPA has not yet set final cleanup levels for the Libby Asbestos Site. This will occur when EPA publishes a final Record of Decision. If this results in a need for additional sampling or cleanup at this property, the property owner will be contacted. Again, the likelihood of this occurring is low.

EPA appreciates your assistance with our work. Please keep this letter with your important papers for future reference. A copy should be passed to the new property owner if the property is sold. If you have any questions, please contact the EPA Information Center at (406) 293-6194 or the Lincoln County Department of Environmental Health at (406)293-7781.

Sincerely,

Jim Christiansen  
Remedial Project Manager